

2007

## **Accommodating a new frontier: the context of law enforcement**

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### **Recommended Citation**

Giles, Howard; Willemyns, Michael; Gallois, Cynthia; and Anderson, Michelle Chernikoff: Accommodating a new frontier: the context of law enforcement 2007, 129-162.

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## Accommodating a New Frontier: The Context of Law Enforcement

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**T**his chapter spotlights communication accommodation theory (CAT: see Giles, Coupland, & Coupland, 1991) – a longstanding framework (Gallois, Ogay, & Giles, 2005; Giles, 1973) that has been heralded as one of the most prominent in the social psychology of language (Tracy & Haspel, 2004) and one that has captured cross-disciplinary imaginations (Coupland & Jaworski, 1997). The theory has had a history of applications to an array of organizational contexts (e.g., Bourhis, 1991) and, herein, we add another exciting possibility, namely its relevance for a more incisive appreciation of understanding police–civilian relations. After a brief discussion about what images people hold of police officers, we introduce CAT with particular attention to its face and identity concerns, whilst illustrating throughout its applicability to law enforcement situations. Thereafter, we distil the theoretical essence of CAT down to four key principles, underscoring its potential for developing not only an innovative research agenda for the future, but also for suggesting new theoretical propositions to test in this applied domain.

### LAW ENFORCEMENT, ATTITUDES, AND COMMUNICATION

#### *The Rationale*

But first, why should CAT focus its resources on this particular new frontier? Our answer lies not merely in the lack of research in this arena but, more poignantly, in its ability to contribute to the promotion of community policing and, hence, increased public safety.

As elsewhere, crime statistics in the United States have been afforded regular and significant media attention over the last couple of decades. Whether the trends have been upward or downward, people have consistently expressed

concern in regional and national opinion polls about crime as being a major issue facing them, their children, and society at large (e.g., Di Camillo, 2005). Not surprisingly, matters of security and safety have been exacerbated since the September 11 tragedy, an event which has engaged the attention of social psychologists (e.g., Cohn, Mehl, & Pennebaker, 2004). On occasion, socio-psychological research has foregrounded police officers as subjects of study and focused upon their unique roles in society (Markus, 2004). For instance, racial biases associated with police use of force (Eberhardt, Goff, Purdie, & Davies, 2004), police involvement in witness identification processes (e.g., Wells, 2001), crime victims' decisions about notifying the police or not (e.g., Greenberg & Beach, 2004; Kuehnle & Sullivan, 2003), adolescent contact with police in schools (e.g., Hewstone, Hopkins, & Routh, 1992), and depictions of police work in the media (e.g., Leishman & Mason, 2003; Oliver, 1994) have been examined. Nonetheless, there has been a dearth of research in the social psychology of language and communication and across the language sciences focusing on law enforcement. That said, articles (e.g., Gibbons, 2001), texts (Gundersen & Hopper, 1984; Kidd & Braziel, 1999), and monographs (Giles, 2002; Heydon, 2005; Solan & Tiersma, 2005) are beginning to emerge – and our chapter is a further attempt to fill this lacuna.

We contend that CAT is particularly useful when analyzing much (albeit certainly not all) police–civilian communication from an intergroup perspective (Harwood & Giles, 2005) where each interactant is likely to see the other mainly in terms of role (police, civilian) rather than as an individual; indeed the uniform and equipment themselves are likely to have engendered strong feelings of intergroup salience and even anxiety since childhood (Boyanowsky & Griffiths, 1982; Durkin & Jeffrey, 2000; Singer & Singer, 1985). This might be especially the case in potentially negatively-valenced, emotionally-charged interactions such as traffic stops, where outgroup membership becomes really particularly salient (see Gallois & Giles, 1998) and uncertainty and anxiety is particularly high (Gudykunst, 1995).

Many experts now agree that the expectation that police agencies on their own can combat crime is but a myth. As Bayley (1994, p. 10) argued:

That the police are not able to prevent crime should not come as a big surprise to thoughtful people. It is generally understood that social conditions outside the control of the police, as well as outside the control of the criminal justice system as a whole, determine crime levels in communities. Police themselves recognize this, often complaining that they are expected to protect communities from the consequences of their own neglect. In a phrase police often use, they see themselves as a “band-aid on cancer.”

Clearly, and a fundamental axiom of the philosophy of community policing (see Morash & Ford, 2003; Weatheritt, 1988), is a commitment to the notion that the community needs to work *in partnership with* law enforcement agencies to reduce neighborhood crime. If this is to be realized, we need to understand the dynamics of police–civilian encounters better (see Skogan, 2004), for if these are less than satisfactory, we argue that people will likely not invest in the community-oriented policing programs and opportunities that are available.

Before introducing CAT itself, a brief flavor of the cross-disciplinary literature

on attitudes of the public to law enforcement is provided as a backdrop to the contention that police-civilian relations may currently not be optimal.

### *Images of Law Enforcement*

The law enforcement profession has multiple facets coordinating to serve and protect the public on the one hand, while engaging in monitoring and regulating the public on the other (see Cordner, 1989). Police officers are expected to be heroic yet are not infrequently sent into situations in which satisfactory resolutions are not immediately available. Perlmutter (2000) refers to the "through-the-squad-windshield world" as unkind and perilous, with police officers expected to relate to that same community in an amicable manner. Similarly, the National Research Council (2004) stresses that a central dilemma of policing is that "public demands for effective law enforcement may seem to conflict with the responsibility to protect individual civil liberties" (p. 57). In fact a number of scholars have pointed to civilians holding contradictory images of law enforcement (e.g., White & Menke, 1982) and their being simultaneously viewed as revered and despised (Molloy & Giles, 2002). It is possible, too, that officers are cognizant of this duality and ultimately the onus is probably on them to manage this (probably unresolvable) dilemma. Such felt ambivalence in concert with the communicative demands placed on police officers in the street, let alone emotionally managing the inevitable traumas and dangers that arise, as well as intradepartmental conflict between management and the rank and file, can lead to a quite stressful occupation (see Howard, Tuffin, & Stephens, 2000; Toch, 2002).

Indeed, in a within-profession survey conducted among Californian police agencies, 94% conceded that they had an image problem (Oberle, 2004). This same survey also pointed out that police agencies perceive that the public misunderstands law enforcement practices and in ways that are sustained by the visual media. In fact, according to Van den Bulck (1998), at least one police officer appears in virtually every movie or TV series across a range of very different genres, be they action, serious, or romantic. In his visual ethnographic work, Perlmutter (2000) distinguished between the media and street realities of police work. In the former, TV cops are always in action, constantly fighting serious crime, are often violent themselves, and every story has an ending. In reality, however, there can be much inaction and volumes of paperwork, with the officer appearing in the middle of a story where a resolution may never occur. Perlmutter argues that the media's images of police officers and crime help the public to create impractical expectations of their effectiveness while, at the same time, making the public more fearful and desirous of protection. Malkin (2005) takes the argument one step further, referring to the mainstream media in the USA having an "anti-cop bias" that "... is predisposed to harp on law enforcement as an inherently racist and reckless institution; hype the hellions at the expense of the heroes" (p. G2). She claims that little attention in any week is focused on the courage of officers or on the egregious acts committed upon them.

In addition, "images of ... [police] ... violence and wrongdoing contain a powerful appeal for an audience, and this attention-grabber also sells products.

Unfortunately, stories based on these factors have tainted people's views of law enforcement, causing citizens to critically view the entities that are in force to protect them" (Oberle, 2004, p. 16). Yet in addition to mediated parasocial contact with the police, the public's attitudes are also formed by their actual interaction with police officers and their evaluations of these. Indeed, Maxson, Hennigan, and Sloane (2003) found in four areas of Los Angeles that, while 35% of respondents believed that mass media were the greatest influence on their opinions of the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD), 65% believed that personal experience was the factor that most shaped their opinion of the LAPD. In this study, officers' "demeanor" was judged in terms of how respectful, trustworthy, fair, helpful, and concerned they acted – attributes that, in the main, constitute ingredients of accommodation to be introduced below. Interestingly, half of the contact that the public reported having with officers occurred in traffic stops, with the next highest event (19.2%) being reporting crimes (Langan, Greenfield, Smith, Durose, & Levin, 2001; Schmitt, Langan, & Durose, 2002). Tellingly too, a study by Tyler and Huo (2002) found that support for the police was associated more with how police treated civilians during interactions than whether the police were successful or not at combating crime. Moreover, these scholars reported that effective policing, whether respondents were African American, Hispanic, White or of another race or ethnicity, is that which is polite, respectful, sincere, and concerned with civil rights (see also Miller, 1999). Interestingly, while most dealings with civilians may in reality be unproblematic, ". . . the sheer volume of police-citizen contact means that a significant number of individual citizens come away dissatisfied with how they were treated" (National Research Council, 2004, p. 2).

Of course, attitudes toward the police are varied, and many investigations have pointed to the role of socio-demographic factors, with older, female, and Caucasian respondents evincing more positive views toward law enforcement (e.g., Eschholz, Sims Blackwell, Gertz, & Chiricos, 2002; Garofalo, 1997; Olsen, 2005; Tyler & Huo, 2002). However, in the Maxson et al. (2003) study mentioned above, it was found that the effects of race and ethnicity were significantly reduced when the level of perceived neighborhood disorder was drawn into the equation (see also Hennigan, Maxson, Sloane, & Ranney, 2002). More specifically, residents in those communities where the level of criminal disorder was low and there was a strongly-held belief of common values, cohesion, sharing, and mutual reliance not only had more positive images of the local police, but were also more likely to share responsibility with law enforcement for keeping their neighborhoods safe.

Oberle (2004) maintained that "creating a long-term positive image of law enforcement in the minds of the public rests with the support of individual officers and their ability to create a positive image on a daily basis within the communities they serve" (p. 27). Of course, creating this image is challenging given that officers – probably more than most of us – communicate with "numerous people whose backgrounds, needs, points of view, and prejudices vary dramatically, moment to moment" (Thompson, 1983, p. 9). In this light, it is relevant to point out that officers have to regularly engage not only those with a criminal history or disposition but also, more generally, those members of the public who hold a negative view of them. Perez (1994) reported that law enforcement is the recipient of most of the

public's complaints about the legal system, many of which relate to officers' alleged overaggressiveness or rudeness. In line with this, Womack and Finley (1986) cogently argued that communication is a primary weapon and resource in an officer's armory.

### *Accommodation-Related Studies and Law Enforcement Images*

This perspective can be seen as manifest in studies we conducted in California (Giles et al., 2006, Studies 1 & 3). In the first of these, we asked 744 respondents (representative of the local city) open-ended questions about their local police agency; the data were reliably coded by two trained independent judges. The prime concern or complaint voiced was that of poor communication skills of officers ( $n = 73$ ), with the next concern interestingly being "none." When it came to issues for improvement, attitude and communication concerns were prominent, framed in terms of increased respect for and understanding of the public ( $n = 50$ ), followed by the need to employ more minority race and female officers ( $n = 45$ ) as well as more officers in general ( $n = 43$ ). When it came to matters currently approved of, again by far the greatest sentiment was accorded a good attitude and communication issues ( $n = 137$ ), with timely response to calls for service mentioned positively ( $n = 44$ ) as was a "good presence" ( $n = 36$ ). Similar findings emerged from a parallel investigation (Study 3) of campus police by 448 students who, again, were representative of their community. By far the most concern was expressed about officers' communication style ( $n = 36$ ) as in "unnecessarily bossy" and "treating us like kids." With regard to improvements that the students were invited to recommend, the same kinds of issues emerged (e.g., "more politeness – it's a university campus, not a prison" and "be more respectful and ethnic-oriented to the diversity on campus";  $n = 48$ ). Correspondingly, the most praise ( $n = 32$ ) was conveyed about respectful communications when it occurred, as in "the officers I have encountered have been very polite and professional" and "an officer smiled at me and said 'hello' to me when I said 'good morning'."

Springboarding from these data, we contend that a social psychological model of language use and communication, such as CAT, might be a useful frame from which to view these issues, and it is to this theory that we now turn. In what follows, central features of CAT are introduced, as are those of social identity theory (SIT), which has become increasingly integral to this communication model. We shall also underscore the value of face management and politeness as being important constructs within the remit of the accommodation framework.

## COMMUNICATION ACCOMMODATION THEORY

### *The Evolution of CAT*

From a social psychological perspective, society consists of individuals with different group memberships, roles, and social identities (based on status or hierarchy level, age, gender, profession, etc.; Nkomo & Cox, 1996), and these group

memberships influence interactants' perceptions of each other (Haslam, 2001) as well as a wide range of communicative behaviors (Ashforth, Kreiner, & Fugate, 2000; Hartley, 1996; Mael & Ashforth, 1995). Police-civilian communication must, then, bridge boundaries intrinsic to the interactants' different group memberships (see also Gardner, Paulsen, Gallois, Callan, & Monaghan, 2001; Jones, Watson, Gardner, & Gallois, 2004), hence studying such encounters from an intergroup lens could be informative (see Hogg & Terry, 2000). However, and as implicit in the foregoing, there has been a dearth of communication research into this specific domain that takes a strong theoretical approach. CAT provides a robust framework by examining interactants' communication goals, motivations, strategies and outcomes.

Research on CAT has, over the decades, gone through numerous refinements and elaborations (see Gallois et al., 2005, for a historical account) and has mainly been directed to inter-ethnic, gender, and intergenerational communication contexts (see Giles & Ogay, 2006). Increasingly, organizational settings (see for example, Baker, 1991; Boggs & Giles, 1998; Bourhis, 1989) have come under its purview. Furthermore, CAT's research priorities have been on revising the theory, rather than applying it to new contexts. Hence, our move here into the police-civilian setting might contribute both toward extending the theory as well as refining it. In most organizational and institutional contexts, not only are interpersonal processes at play, but intergroup ones are also salient and reflected in an array of accommodation choices that signal increases or decreases of social and communicative distance. While CAT now specifies an array of tactics (see Coupland, Coupland, Giles, & Wiemann, 1988; Giles et al., 1991; Jones, Gallois, Callan, & Barker, 1999), for our purposes here we shall simply invoke the dichotomized accommodative and non-accommodative options.

CAT was originally developed as speech accommodation theory (SAT; Giles, 1973). Central to SAT was the argument that during interactions people often modify their speech characteristics (e.g., accent, dialect, speech rate, pauses) in order to achieve various goals (see Street, Brady & Putman, 1983). For example, interactants may have "accommodative" goals or motivations, such as seeking the other's social approval (Giles, Mulac, Bradac & Johnson, 1987), making communication as smooth and effective as possible (Gallois, Franklyn-Stokes, Giles & Coupland, 1988), or signaling that they belong to the same social category, such as a particular ethnic or socio-economic group (Bourhis, 1983; Giles & Johnson, 1981, 1987). Conversely, SAT proposes non-accommodative (or even "counteraccommodative") goals or motivations, such as signaling disapproval or emphasizing social distance (Giles, 1973; Street, 1982), or even making communication problematic (see Coupland, Wiemann & Giles, 1991; Gardner, 2002; Gardner & Jones, 1999; Petronio, Ellemers, Giles & Gallois, 1998). Speech accommodation theory was renamed communication accommodation theory (Giles et al., 1987) in recognition that not only speech characteristics but other communicative behaviors (e.g., non-verbal behaviors and discourse patterns) also play an important role in the process of interpersonal or intergroup communicative adjustments (see also Gallois, Giles, Jones, Cargile & Ota, 1995; Giles et al., 1991; Giles & Wadleigh, 1999).

CAT has also been concerned with the *social consequences* (or decoding) of

accommodative messages. Albeit imbued with important contextual caveats, recipients of accommodative behaviors often value such overtures from others up to an optimal level and reward them by attributing favorable traits of competence and benevolence (e.g., Giles, Taylor, & Bourhis, 1973). The message here is that receivers believe the accommodator wishes to identify with them and garner their respect and admiration, and hence any such positive approaches are, understandably, appreciated. If, however, communicators do not move in this direction or even go so far as to accentuate communicative differences by counteraccommodating, clearly the message to the recipient (extenuating circumstantial attributions notwithstanding) is not one of social or personal endorsement. The repercussions often include unfavorable evaluations directed at the perpetrator (e.g., Bourhis, Giles, & Lambert, 1975). That said, ingroup members (such as police officers) often find much merit in observing their peers and colleagues non-accommodating to contrastive (and especially antagonistic) outgroup persons (Doise, Sinclair, & Bourhis, 1976). Of course, courtesy norms dictate that such non-accommodations are confined within the boundaries of politeness for the most part. Indeed, many officers are trained *not* to take (or dwell on) discourteous remarks and antagonistic stances personally, but rather to explain them away to their law enforcement group membership: "the people are actually not talking to me but to or at the role." By invoking such an attributional routine, officers are not distracted or irritated and can more effectively control the situation, especially if it has the potential to escalate.

In its formative years, the antecedents and consequences of accommodative and non-accommodative communications were often presented in propositional format, not simply to capture its essentials, but to allow predictions to be subject to empirical testing (e.g., Street & Giles, 1982; Thakerar, Giles, & Cheshire, 1982). This led to more complex, yet far less parsimonious refinements (e.g., Gallois et al., 1988; Giles, Mulac, Bradac, & Johnson, 1987), such that over time propositional structures were put aside in overviews, and the theory and attending research became articulated in more discursive terms.

### *Social Identity and CAT*

As CAT has in recent years embraced more of an intergroup perspective for examining interpersonal communication, social identity plays a major role in accommodative processes (see Callan, Gallois & Forbes, 1983). Policing involves intense loyalties, yet as Fortman and Giles (2006, p. 92) argued, simply because one self-identifies with a group strongly, does not mean one embraces its culture, and "correspondingly, just because certain people do not publicly espouse strong affiliations with a social group, does not necessarily imply they do not have any commerce with that group's culture." Police officers are socialized not only into a highly selected ingroup with its own norms and expectations, but also into a unique set of subcultures (see Reuss-Ianni, 1983). While it is beyond the scope of this chapter to provide a detailed review of social identity theory (SIT: e.g., Tajfel & Turner, 1986), a number of issues relevant to our current concerns are highlighted next (for organizational contexts, see Haslam, 2001).

Social identity was defined by Tajfel (1974) as “the individual’s knowledge that he belongs to certain social groups, together with some emotional and value significance to him of the group membership” (p. 31). Importantly, a number of scholars have pointed out that many of our social identities are established through and negotiated by *communicative* practices (e.g., Abrams, O’Connor, & Giles, 2002; Gardner et al., 2001). SIT proposes that one’s self-concept is comprised of a personal identity (based on idiosyncratic characteristics such as bodily attributes, abilities, and psychological traits) and a social identity, based on salient group memberships. Moreover, CAT is built on the supposition (see Giles, Scherer, & Taylor, 1979) that interactants’ communication styles contain social markers that convey not only content (the actual words spoken), but also parallel information through non-verbal as well as verbal cues about the speaker’s personal and social identities (e.g., personality, age, ethnicity, social status). Stohl and Redding (1987) argued that one way of distinguishing interpersonal from intergroup communication – based on personal or social identities, respectively – is by examining the formality of interactants’ language: the less formal it is, the more interpersonal it is, while intergroup communication is characterized by higher levels of accommodated formality. A number of researchers (e.g., Giles & Hewstone, 1982; Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey, 1988) have conceptualized interpersonal and intergroup identity as representing two orthogonal continua (see also, Gallois et al., 1988); for instance, any given encounter could be construed as high in both of these terms. Of course, these orientations, and their influence upon communication accommodation processes, can alter in a dynamic manner throughout an interaction, depending on such factors as the other interactant’s changing accommodative stance, the level of threat, topic of discussion, and so forth.

Police officers encounter such situations on a daily basis where they wish to acknowledge the special circumstances of civilians and enact accommodative cordiality. Yet at the same time, they need to establish their legitimate authority through social distance and by being non-accommodative at other levels. Giles (2002) provides the example of how many officers are “bidialectal” to the extent that they can code-switch between empathetic (accommodative) behavior and authoritative (non-accommodative) stances in interactions with civilians. Furthermore, he points out the need for any transitions back and forth between these two styles of interaction to be smooth, otherwise for example “out-of-the-blue shifts toward empathy can be interpreted . . . as patronizing” (p. 217) and will likely fail to elicit compliance from, and possibly offend, the civilian. Indeed, such a facility to move quickly between accommodative options may well be a communicative competence skill that officers need to possess to be effective (and safe) in their interactions on the street. While this skill is encompassed in what is known in police jargon as “verbal judo” (Thompson, 1983), it clearly is a unique facet of interpersonal accommodation.

### *Further Intergroup Dynamics and CAT*

Three further fundamental SIT notions are worthy of note, the first being a distinction between ingroups and outgroups. The former is “a group to which one

belongs, whereas an outgroup is a relevant comparison group that is viewed in contrast to one's ingroup" (Williams, 2001, p. 5). When one's social identity is salient, so too are intergroup processes. The more a person identifies with his or her ingroup (e.g., other police officers and police culture), the more he or she may feel and act more distinctively from outgroup members (e.g., civilians). Second and relatedly, an ingroup or outgroup orientation toward another person is a function not only of the other speaker's group membership, but also of the latter's group prototypicality (see Turner & Haslam, 2001). Gallois and Callan (1988) conducted a study of impressions of people from several cultural groups by members of the majority (in this case, Anglo-Australians), based on their group membership (culture) and the closeness of their non-verbal behavior (e.g., eye contact, smiling, vocal pitch, and volume) to the prototype for the majority culture. They determined prototypicality empirically, using the approach developed by Turner et al. (1987). Gallois and Callan found that impressions were more positive as a function both of ingroup membership and of the extent to which behavior was close to the ingroup prototype.

Taking this perspective, prototypical people are seen as maximally like other members of their ingroup, and maximally different from members of outgroups, on core or defining group attributes (prototypes). In some cases, these attributes can be communicative features, such as language, dialect, dress, and hair styles (Reid, Giles, & Harwood, 2005). For example, a prototypical police officer may use (or be expected to use, or be interpreted and heard as using) a so-called "powerful style" of communication (e.g., directives and orders) with very few powerless features of language, such as hedges and requests for reassurance (Mayfield, Mayfield & Kopf, 1995; Ng & Bradac, 1993).

Third, intergroup perceptions are also influenced by the perceived legitimacy of the status structure. Bettencourt and Bartholow (1998) defined status legitimacy as "the extent to which both high and low status groups accept the validity of the status structure" (p. 3). They found that when members of low prestige groups perceived the status structure as legitimate, they were less negatively biased in their intergroup attitudes towards the higher status group. Further, George and Chattopadhyay (2002) argued that employees who highly identified with their organizations were more likely to accept the legitimacy of the job status structure than low identifying employees. Again, these issues are relevant to the present research, as police in a free and democratic society are empowered by the people. Thus, effective functioning requires that they are indeed perceived as legitimate by civilians. However, not all civilians perceive officers as legitimate authorities, as we saw above. This is important, as attributions of trust and fairness can be central to the degree to which members of the public themselves accommodate to the police.

Finally, the ways in which social identity processes are related to accommodation processes can be drawn from a study by Maass, Salvi, Arcuri, and Semin (1989). They found that interactants tended to discuss positive ingroup behaviors using abstract language (thereby easy to interpret), but discussed positive outgroup behaviors in more concrete terms (thereby more difficult to interpret). The converse was found when describing negative behaviors. The authors concluded

that this process serves to cognitively accentuate positive stereotypes about ingroup members, while drawing attention to negative stereotypes about outgroup members (see Chapter 3, this volume). This finding is congruent with the concept from social identity theory that groups have a vested interest in sustaining and emphasizing intergroup distinctiveness (Ashforth & Mael, 1989) and demonstrates the potential for integrating social identity processes with communication behaviors in a comprehensive theory of communication accommodation. In CAT terms, linguistic concreteness or abstractness can be seen as levels of interpretability (i.e., level of concreteness affects ease of decoding, and thereby understanding). Indeed, as in Maass et al.'s study, concrete language could serve to accentuate negative outgroup stereotypes, and therefore create intergroup distance (i.e., non-accommodation).

## MODELING CAT

Over the years, and in order to summarize its important constituents and the links between them, CAT has been variously and schematically represented. One of these versions (after Gallois et al., 2005) appears in Figure 5.1 in order to facilitate discussion.

### *Socio-historical Context and Initial Orientations*

As Figure 5.1 shows, the CAT model underscores the importance of situational variables. These include macro-contextual variables, such as the communication rules of the society at large, through to micro-contextual variables relating to the specific interaction. Many situational variables can affect communication accommodation processes, such as formality (Gallois et al., 1988), social rules (McKirnan & Hamayan, 1984; Shimanoff, 1980), interactants' goals (Argyle, Furnham, & Graham, 1981), relational rules (Williams, Giles, Coupland, Dalby, & Manasse, 1990), and situational norms (Ball et al., 1984; Gallois, Callan & McKenzie Palmer, 1992). Studies suggest that accommodation is evaluated positively if it follows social or situational norms, but can be evaluated negatively if it is norm-violating. Of particular relevance here might be the history of a personal relationship between an officer and a civilian (e.g., a homeless person).

Images of law enforcement – as with so many social institutions – are a part of their time, clearly so in the United States where police practices have changed over the last few decades (for a history, see Roberg, Novak, & Corder, 2005). Poignantly, Perez (1994, p. 21), discussing police and civil unrest in the 1960s at a Democratic Party convention, asserted:

Before that moment in 1968, most Americans thought that accusations of police abuse were the self-serving, irrational rhetoric of criminals and political extremists. It is not an exaggeration to say that after the convention, average, middle-American citizens would never again feel the same about their police and police review.

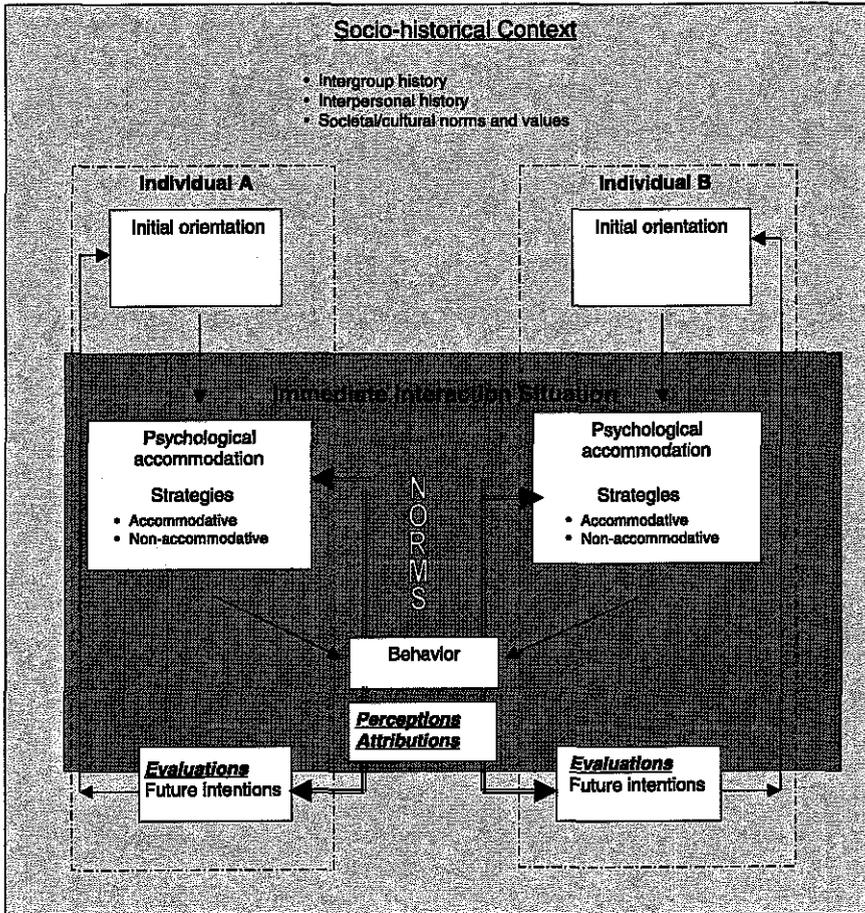


FIGURE 5.1. The communication accommodation theory model (after Gallois et al., 2005).

In other words, a neighborhood which harbors feelings of victimization by law enforcement is not the kind of communicative climate where mutual accommodation will easily emerge. A macro-context which epitomizes such a backdrop to a more corrupt and more militarized level is Mexico. Adrian Lopez Rivera enrolled in the Mexico City police academy, graduated, and became an official police officer. Unknown to his colleagues, and later publishing his findings in magazines, he recorded detailed information and conversations where, among the ranks, honesty in relating with the public was construed as deviant (Bottello & Rivera, 2000). Other accounts of corruption and the infiltration of drug traffickers into law enforcement are available (Jimenez, 2003; Lopez-Montial, 2000). Such experiences would predictably have an impact on Mexican émigrés to the United States.

In the previously cited Giles et al. (2006) study on attitudes toward police, and with this in mind, we also surveyed members of the Latino/a population

in the Spanish language (Study 2,  $n = 720$ , with 90% being from Mexico). Respondents did, indeed, view police in their country of origin as quite corrupt and significantly less accommodating than in their current situation. Moreover, how accommodating these immigrants perceived police in their country of origin to be predicted how accommodating they perceived the local city police in California to be, which itself predicted ratings of local city police officers. Put another way, in order to improve community-police relationships, current attention and programs have to be directed in part toward perceptions of past ills and demeanors. The mental transportation of accommodative histories from a prior venue so as to provide interpretive meanings to similar ongoing interactions in another more recent venue is fascinating terrain for CAT (see Giles & Harwood, 1997).

### *Initial Orientation and Immediate Situation*

The accommodation model in Figure 5.1 also indicates the importance of pre-interaction variables (cf. Williams et al., 1990) or initial orientation (Gallois et al., 1988). These include personal and social identities (as discussed above), stereotypes about the other interactant or the outgroup (Gudykunst, 1991), and individual differences in social skills and conversation sensitivities (Johnson, 1992; Spitzberg & Cupach, 1984). Mastroski, Willis, and Snipes (2002) provided an empirically-derived typology of police officers. CAT suggests that their "professional" type might be more inherently accommodative than their "reactive" or "avoidant," let alone "tough cop," counterparts.

CAT specifies a number of important processes that occur *within* the interaction. These include the interactants' psychological states (e.g., mood, level of arousal) and their interactional goals. Goals may include, for example, maximizing communication efficiency, seeking approval, and/or signaling ingroup membership. At a more transactional level within the interaction is the interactant's addressee focus. This refers to the process whereby a speaker focuses on, or pays attention to, various aspects of his or her addressee's communicative features (Coupland et al., 1988; Gallois et al., 1988). For example, interactants may attend to the other person's communicative competence, level of understanding of, say, the topic at hand (their so-called interpretive competence), or to their conversational needs or role position.

**Politeness and Face as CAT Goals** In his pioneering work, Goffman (1967) conceptualized face as a self-presentation concept where individuals desire positive value for the public face they present. Recent research and theorizing in organizational communication has emphasized the importance of face in interpersonal or intergroup communication, particularly in status-marked interactions (see Tracy, 2002). In this regard, Morand (2000) found that participants systematically varied their linguistic politeness according to their perceptions of the distribution of power in the interactions (see also Gnisci, 2005). For example, speakers used more politeness strategies (e.g., indirect questioning, deference, reasons in assertions) with higher status interactants. Brown and Levinson (1987)

similarly described face as the wish to appear desirable to significant others, by way of various forms of linguistic politeness.

Giles and Coupland (1991) suggested that much of the theorizing by Brown and Levinson regarding "positive politeness" discourse strategies could be readily integrated into CAT (see also Jones et al., 1999). Positive politeness can be characterized as cooperative discourse-moves aimed at claiming common ground with an interlocutor and, more generally, *fulfilling interactants' conversational needs*. Though Brown and Levinson discuss such strategies exclusively in terms of redressing face-threat, their relevance seems broader, *fulfilling face-promotion and face-maintenance goals* too. Clearly, such discourse-moves are very much aligned with the central accommodative motivations of approval-seeking and ingroup solidarity or affiliation. Relatedly, it has been found that young people who report they *should* be polite to older people (also respectful and attentive) not only claim to have adopted relevant communicative behaviors in the past (e.g., made allowances for them, talked about topics they liked, and restrained from arguing), but also report more intergenerational satisfaction as a consequence (McCann, Dailey, Giles, & Ota, 2005).

Face concerns include both positive and negative face. Positive face is the "want to be desirable to or solidarity with significant others," while negative face, conversely, is the "want that actions be unimpeded by others" (MacMartin, Wood, & Kroger, 2001, p. 222). MacMartin et al. also pointed out (but not in CAT terminology) that the use of politeness strategies is a function of factors such as the power of the speaker relative to the hearer and the degree of social distance between the speakers (see also Willemyns, Gallois, & Callan, 2000). Positive politeness tactics or behaviors may include appropriate use of first-name or ingroup name, or claiming a common point of view. They also involve the avoidance of face-threatening acts such as criticizing, disagreeing, interrupting, embarrassing, and even imposing by making requests. It is clear that face and support issues have implications for the addressee focus and strategies components of accommodation theory. *For example, a person can accommodate by appearing not to notice a faux pas, or by changing the topic if it appears uncomfortable or embarrassing for the other person. Further, an interactant could provide positive face and support for another by complimenting them in an appropriate manner, all of which can function together with emotional restraint to de-escalate potential conflict* (Hammer & Rogan, 2002).

Negative politeness, conversely, implies or establishes social distance between the interactants. Negative politeness tactics are associated with common expressions of linguistic politeness (e.g., "excuse me . . .", "Sorry to bother you but . . .", etc). Such expressions are a form of deference and are often markers of non-familiarity, social distance, or power differential. Finally, face threat or face attack refers to an interactant being impolite or attacking the value of the other person (Tracy & Tracy, 1998; Trees & Manusov, 1998).

Just as Williams and Giles (1996) found that complimenting, advice, attentiveness, positive emotions, non-superiority, and non-prying (negative face) were salient in satisfying interactions with elderly people, these themes could also be applied to police-civilian communication. For example, positive feedback from a

civilian may be a form of reinforcement for a police officer, and may lead to more positive perceptions of the civilian (Anderson & Jones, 2000; Cusella, 1987). In terms of advice, a police officer may also provide both instrumental and socio-emotional support through providing advice and cautions to the civilian (McManus & Russell, 1997) as well as well-articulated explanations warranting any actions. Conversely, an officer can also criticize, rebuke, and lecture a civilian on a petty offense that can be seen as impolite, rude, and non-accommodating.

### *Accommodation Strategies*

According to CAT, people modify their speech, non-verbal behavior, and/or discourse patterns to become more like their interactant in a bid to decrease social distance, seek or signal approval, and thereby accommodate. Researchers have found, for example, that when two people meet, they often become more alike in terms of accent (Coupland, 1984; Willemyns, Gallois, Callan & Pittam, 1997), language usage (Giles et al., 1973; Bourhis, Giles, Leyens & Tajfel, 1979), pronunciation (Giles, 1973), speech rate (Giles & Smith, 1979; Webb, 1972), and vocal intensity (Natale, 1975).

CAT draws upon similarity-attraction theory (Byrne, 1971) and SIT (Hogg & Abrams, 1988; Tajfel, 1974; Tajfel & Turner, 1986) to propose motivations for accommodation. According to the former, the more similar people are on various characteristics, the more likely they will approve of or be attracted to each other. Accordingly, interactants can increase the likelihood of interpersonal attraction or approval by making their communicative behaviors more similar by accommodating to each other (either consciously or subconsciously). Support for this proposition comes from many studies. For example, Natale (1975) found that speakers with a high need for approval converged more to their partner's vocal intensity and pause length than speakers with a low need for approval. Similarly, in employment interviews, applicants have been found to converge to the interviewer's turn duration and response latency (Matarazzo & Weins, 1972) and communication style (Mathison, 1988).

At a more intergroup level, CAT (drawing upon SIT) proposes that individuals often accommodate and converge toward one another to signal that they belong to a similar social group. An interactant may accentuate his or her accent or dialect to signal that he or she belongs to the same social class as the other (e.g., Trudgill, 1983, 1986). For example, Willemyns et al. (1997) found that job applicants converged to their interviewers' accent, including converging "downwards" to their less prestigious accent.

Accommodation can also be used in an attempt to increase communicative efficiency (Gallois et al., 1988), with a conversational partner's interpretive abilities often being susceptible to social stereotyping (Manusov, 1999). For example, it has been found that older adults are sometimes spoken to more loudly and slowly than younger adults, and even in a "baby-talk" fashion (Coupland et al., 1988). Here, speakers' accommodations are triggered by societal stereotypes they have about elderly people's anticipated competencies. However, older adults who are not hard of hearing and who have no other communication deficits can also be

the recipients of such talk. While the sender, who could in some instances be a police officer (Giles, Zwang-Weissman, & Hajek, 2004), may have attempted to accommodate, he or she has in fact "overaccommodated." Such misfired or mis-carried accommodation attempts are often the result of misperceptions (based on social group stereotypes) of the receiver's interpretive abilities. Finally here, one may accommodate by helping the other to meet the other's conversational needs (or not accommodate by hindering them). For example, Coupland et al. (1988) proposed that accommodative interactants may facilitate their partner's contribution to the interaction by offering speaking turns, eliciting information, and using conversational repair.

Giles and Smith (1979) examined the issue of *optimal* levels and latitudes of acceptable communication. Their central proposition was that there is a non-linear relationship between accommodation and approval. Accommodation may be considered appropriate only up to a certain point, beyond which it is considered socially inappropriate, depending on various factors such as social, situational, or status norms. For example, Jablin (1985) argued that employees who accommodated too much may be evaluated by supervisors as ingratiating (or, in our terms, overaccommodating). Further, Platt and Weber (1984) found that Australians who perceived themselves as accommodating to Singaporean English in an effort to be better understood were, in fact, evaluated negatively by the Singaporeans. In follow-up interviews, many of the Singaporeans indicated that they felt it was inappropriate for a foreigner (i.e., an outgroup member) to use the speech style of the local ingroup. Similarly, Platt and Weber found that Australian tourists misinterpreted attempts at accommodation by Singaporean service staff. Many of the Australians perceived the Singaporean staff as sarcastic, while the Singaporeans believed they were speaking in a manner the Australians would consider friendly.

**Subjective Accommodation** These findings raise the important issue of subjective or *psychological* accommodation (see Figure 5.1) as distinct from actual or objective accommodation. A number of researchers have found that interactants may adjust their speech style to be more similar to their subjective *perceptions* of the other person's speech, rather than to what could be measured as the person's *actual* speech (e.g., Larsen, Martin & Giles, 1977; Street & Hopper, 1982). Various social-cognitive factors have been found to contribute to distorted perceptions of interactants' speech, such as stereotypes and expectations (Burgoon & Burgoon, 2001; Street & Giles, 1982). For example, Scherer (1979) found that listeners tended to perceive "dominant" speakers as louder than they actually were. Thakerar and Giles (1981) found that when a speaker was described as *having high status*, he was perceived as having a more prestigious accent than when he was described as having low status. In the street, and a situation that is causing some grave public concerns, civilians sometimes interpret officers' "requests" to search them as *indirect commands* (Tiersma & Solan, 2004). Moreover, Thakerar, Giles, and Cheshire (1982) found that interactants who tried to accommodate their partners' speech actually were seen as non-accommodative, because of their inaccurate stereotypes of their partner's speech. Thus, while subjectively the speakers were

converging, to the receiver they were actually diverging. Indeed, a critical aspect of CAT is the notion that people accommodate (or not) to where they *believe* others to be communicatively.

This evokes the contentious issue of communicative awareness as still an unresolved one in CAT, as it has been provocatively discussed elsewhere (e.g., Leets & Giles, 1993). While some accommodation processes may be quite conscious (e.g., speaking more formally in a formal workplace meeting), other accommodation processes may occur at a low level of awareness (e.g., simplifying language to become more interpretable, or the automatic use of workplace jargon). Research in this area has produced mixed findings. Gregory (1985), for example, contended that accommodation processes are not consciously known or controlled by interactants. However, Street (1982) found that the majority of listeners were aware of some forms of accommodation, such as convergence on speech rate and turn duration, but not of others, such as convergence on speech latency. Further, Putman and Street (1984) found that not only were interactants unaware of their partners' accommodations, but they were also often unaware of their own accommodations.

In the previously cited Giles et al. (2006) study, three samples of respondents were asked in a variety of ways and contexts (e.g., after church, door-to-door survey, on-line) about their attitudes to local law enforcement. Depending on the sample, a range of socio-demographic factors and other questions (e.g., perceptions of trust, amount of police contact) were asked. In addition, questions were posed about perceptions of officer accommodativeness to them: how well they considered that officers listened to people, took people's views into account, and wanted to understand their needs and unique situations. Across all three studies, socio-demographic factors had little direct effect on ratings of local officers *per se* but, instead (along the lines discussed earlier), how much they perceived officers as accommodating was a very significant predictor of attitudes toward the police. This set of investigations was the first empirical foray into exploring the usefulness of CAT and its constructs in the domain of police-civilian interactions.

The compelling profile emerging therein – along with perceived trust – has also been evident in students' evaluations of their experiences with law enforcement (but this time with respect to "police in general") in two other areas of the USA (Kansas and Louisiana), as well as across a range of other countries varying in policing styles and ideologies, including Taiwan, the People's Republic of China, South Africa, and Zambia (Giles et al., in press; Hajek et al., 2006).

### *Non-accommodativeness*

"Speech maintenance" involves the absence of any adjustments, either toward or away from the other's speech (see Bourhis, 1979). This in itself may be perceived by interactants as a form of non-accommodation, as no effort is made by the speaker to reduce social distance or to make communication smoother (Giles et al., 1987). Objectively, however, maintenance may also occur if speakers are unable to accommodate; for example, they may lack the necessary communication

repertoire and skills (Argyle, 1973), or conversational sensitivity (e.g., Daly, Vangelisti & Daughton, 1988). Again and in line with similarity attraction theory and social identity theory, CAT proposes that people can non-accommodate from another's communicative patterns to signal disapproval or social distance between themselves and the other (Ball, Gallois & Callan, 1989; Ball, Giles, Byrne & Berechree, 1984; Beebe & Giles, 1984; Giles & Johnson, 1987). For example, speakers with upper class accents may diverge away from someone with a regional accent by emphasizing their prestigious accent, thereby indicating that they belong to different social groups. In addition, a message of wishing to be distant and superior can easily be conveyed non-verbally to another, such as when an officer stands stiffly with her or his arms folded. Furthermore, the effect of these cues will still remain potent and outweigh accompanying spoken words which by themselves might signal a quite appeasing stance (Argyle, Salter, Nicholson, Williams, & Burgess, 1970).

It is also possible to use interpretability tactics – that is, moves enacted to take account of a listener's limited knowledge of a topic – but in *non-accommodative* ways, so as to increase social distance and/or to make an interaction more difficult for the other person. For example, a police officer may persistently use jargon and legal terms (e.g., an unfamiliar penal code number) to assert his or her knowledge advantage, to establish authority, or to maintain “professional distance” from the civilian. Likewise, the use of language such as “we pursued the suspected offender” (instead of “we chased the guy”) can frequently be heard when officers are speaking to the camera on so-called “reality cop shows.” In addition, an officer can also try to keep the other person in role (non-accommodatively) by various interpersonal control strategies. These may include such behaviors as condescending diminutive terms of address (e.g., “lad”, “dear”, “honey”). Further, a police officer may make frequent and inappropriate interruptions when interacting with a civilian (non-accommodation), but wait politely for his or her conversational turn when interacting with his own superiors (accommodation). Stoutland (2001) appears to recognize the importance of varying accommodation in that many participants in her study believed that, while respect from the police was important, it is dependent on the circumstances and the interactants. She reports:

The issue for them was not whether or how often the police interrogated people on the street but how they treated people when they did so . . . [they] did not suggest that police officers should be nice to everyone all the time or treat everyone the same (pp. 248–249).

Indeed, noting the potential costs of accommodation by a police officer in a situation that demands – as most do – officer safety, Giles (2002) adds that such a communicative stance “can be dysfunctional . . . under certain life-threatening circumstances” (p. 217). In such instances, for example in a traffic stop (where the driver could be fleeing from the scene of a crime or a potential repeat offender and will incur severe penalties this time), the ordinary citizen (who is highly likely to be anxious, uncertain, and perhaps frustrated or even angry) will not be cognizant of

what may be for the officer a rational choice to act and communicate. Thus, the officer may be perceived as *underaccommodating*.

### *Attributions, Evaluations, and Outcomes*

CAT proposes that interactants make attributions or evaluations about each other on the basis of the other's accommodative stance (Giles & Powesland, 1975). Attribution processes (Hewstone, 1989) have also been found to mediate accommodation processes, so that convergence is not always positively attributed and divergence is not always negatively attributed. For instance, Simard, Taylor, and Giles (1976) found that listeners may discount accommodation if the speaker's behavior was explained as *accommodating because of situational pressures*. In terms of police-civilian communication, for example, a civilian may perceive the officer as communicating in an accommodative manner in order to achieve task goals even if he or she appears superficially as socially distant. In general, research indicates that listeners usually attribute accommodation as positively intended. Putman and Street (1984) found that interviewees who converged toward the interviewers' speech rate and response latency were rated more favorably by their interviewers. In like fashion, non-accommodations are generally evaluated as negatively intended (Ball et al., 1984; Street, 1991).

As indicated in Figure 5.1, such evaluations feed back into the interaction, influencing the interactants' subsequent communication strategies, future evaluations, and so on. For example, a police officer entering an interaction with a non-familiar civilian from a different ethnic or social background may consider the civilian's outgroup status to be salient at least initially, issues of "ethnic profiling" notwithstanding (Harris, 1999). However, during the interaction, the civilian may adapt his or her communication to become more personally oriented (e.g., through self-disclosure, less formal tone, airing potential shared interests; see Bonnesen & Hummert, 2002; Ladany & Walker, 2003). A likely outcome of such accommodative behaviors is that the stranger's outgroup status becomes less salient, so the civilian's behavior is no longer labeled so highly on the intergroup dimension. This may result in the officer modifying his or her own communication to become more personally involved. Alternatively in another encounter, a civilian may initially perceive the police officer in highly intergroup, role-oriented terms, then gradually come to see the officer in more interpersonal terms, particularly if the latter has an accommodative communication style (e.g., friendly, engages in small-talk, uses informal language).

Finally, the CAT model in Figure 5.1 indicates that certain post-interactional variables are important in accommodation processes. These include evaluations of the other person (such as intergroup, interpersonal, and affective evaluations), as well as outcomes affecting the self (cognitive, behavioral, and health; see Williams et al., 1990). In terms of the outcomes affecting the self, and as above, Ryan, Giles, Bartolucci, and Henwood (1986) in their "communication predicament model of aging" claimed that the way elderly people are spoken to may well have a direct influence on their sense of personal and self worth and, indeed, on their emotional and physical health (see also Coupland et al., 1988). The transactive nature of CAT

processes is illustrated in the model by the links between different components of the model. For example, post-interaction outcomes can feed back into the process by influencing initial orientation in future interactions with the same person (or with a member of the same social group). For example, if a civilian experiences a negative interaction with a police officer, he or she may have enduring negative stereotypes about police that will affect the initial orientation in interactions with other police.

## ACCOMMODATING THE FUTURE

### *Key CAT Principles*

Over the years, CAT has been refined many times to account for the complexities of interpersonal and intergroup communication processes and even (more recently) communication in the family (Harwood, Soliz, & Lin, 2006). There are certain cases where accommodation is not necessarily positively evaluated, and non-accommodation is not necessarily negatively evaluated. Indeed, researchers have found that in certain intergroup situations, outgroup members may even be evaluated more positively for non-accommodating than accommodating, because of role expectations (Ball et al., 1984; Giles & Smith, 1979). Further, it is likely that some interactants accommodate more than others in the same circumstances (see Ball et al., 1984; Genesee & Bourhis, 1982; Giles & Ogay, 2006). To address the complexities of such processes, elaborations of CAT have included issues of optimal levels of convergence, norms, psychological accommodation, social group identification, as well as social-cognitive factors such as attributions, misperceptions, and levels of awareness. As ever, much has yet to be achieved, and the potential exists for CAT to incorporate the tenets of other theoretical frames, such as interaction adaptation theory, in which expected and desired behaviors assume significance (Burgoon, Stern, & Dillman, 1995; see also Shepard, Giles, & Le Poire, 2001) and procedural justice theory (Giles et al., in press).

Our own contribution here is to proffer, as parsimoniously as possible, four key principles of the theory. These have been framed below so as not only to highlight politeness and face management concerns as being integral to CAT, but also to appeal directly to civilian-police encounters:

1. Speakers will, up to an optimal level, increasingly accommodate the communicative patterns believed characteristic of their interactants, the more they wish to:
  - signal positive face and empathy,
  - elicit the other's approval, respect, understanding, trust, compliance, and cooperation,
  - develop a closer relationship,
  - defuse a potentially volatile situation, or
  - signal common social identities.

2. When attributed (typically) with positive intent, patterns of perceived accommodation increasingly and *cumulatively* enhance recipients':
  - self-esteem,
  - task, interactional, and job satisfaction,
  - favorable images of the speaker's group, fostering the potential for *partnerships to achieve common goals*,
  - mutual understanding, felt supportiveness, and life satisfaction, and
  - attributions of speaker politeness, empathy, competence, benevolence, and trust.
3. Speakers will (other interactional motives notwithstanding) increasingly *non-accommodate* (e.g., diverge from) the communicative patterns believed characteristic of their interactants, the more they wish to signal (or promote):
  - relational dissatisfaction or disaffection with and disrespect for the others' traits, demeanor, actions, or social identities.
4. When attributed with (usually) harmful intent, patterns of perceived *non-accommodation* (e.g., divergence) will be evaluated unfavorably as:
  - unfriendly, impolite, or communicatively incompetent, and
  - reacted to negatively by recipients (e.g., as lacking in empathy and trust).

They may nevertheless be received positively by third-party audiences sharing a valued ingroup identity with the speaker.

### *Predictions and Future Agenda*

These propositions can be adjusted and crafted to yield testable empirical hypotheses in the police-civilian domain. In fact, we believe that this new frontier allows us to formulate unique CAT predictions, a modest array of which will be proffered here. First, officers will accommodate most to those who convey an understanding of their difficult (and dangerous) occupational roles and who are also amenable to recognizing that they might have (albeit inadvertently) perpetrated a violation. Second, and for their part, civilians are most likely to accommodate to officers representing agencies they trust and/or hold law and order as a prime value. In addition, accommodation here may be borne out of a strategic desire to feign *innocence and law abidingness*. Third, *accommodating officers will be seen by civilians as sharing a joint citizenship*; they will be more likely to look favorably upon and actively engage in community policing ventures. Relatedly, such officers will be the recipients of less hostile confrontations, fewer complaints, court appearances, and time off the job.

Fourth, accommodating civilians may be less susceptible to harsh penalties and reprimands from officers. Fifth, officers will portray (or code-switch into) what they believe to be legitimate non-accommodative stances when safety, alertness, or issues of interpersonal control are highly salient. Such demeanor can also

inhibit complacency and vulnerability. Civilians who understand issues of officer safety (e.g., that even a low risk traffic stop in which they are involved could, in another instance, be dangerous to the police officer) are less likely to be threatened, irritated, anxious, uncertain, and evaluatively negative of such non-accommodating messages. Needless to say, the balancing of accommodative and non-accommodating positions, oftentimes within the same encounter, is a challenging communicative skill to enact successfully.

While the principles and attending hypotheses may seem at first blush to be a highly rationalistic template, we do embrace a more social constructionist ethos to the extent that we see accommodative motives, dilemmas, interpretations, attributions, and actions as often emerging out of discourse rather than always being preplanned, prepackaged, or automaton-like (see Giles, 1977). Furthermore, the intriguing and perhaps rather unique feature of the police officer's role, as mentioned above, is the need to portray (and sometimes code-switch between) a protector identity on the one hand and an enforcer identity on the other (e.g., responding to a domestic violence call where both the alleged victim and perpetrator are present). Put another way, the invocation of authority and demand for compliance must be meshed with caring, empathy, and respect. The ways in which this is experienced, talked about, and performed are a fascinating challenge for future research.

Solan and Tiersma (2005) recommended strongly "... that all encounters between police and suspects be videotaped whenever possible. Taping is required in a few states in the USA, and it has been the law for many years in the United Kingdom and Australia" (p. 237). Of course, studying the occasions when taping is implemented in these countries represents an interesting empirical question. Nonetheless, at the moment, with the exception of ride-a-long studies reported in the criminal justice literature (Mastrofski, Reisig, & McCluskey, 2002), we have very few data as to "... what law enforcement communication *actually* looks like" (our italics, Matoesian, 2004, p. 888; see also Gibbons, 2005), let alone more specifically the dynamics of accommodation-non-accommodation beyond the public's impressions of it as overviewed above (Giles et al., 2006, in press).

In tandem, it is important to examine civilians' communication with law enforcement, the expressed affect associated with it (Drury, Catan, Dennison, & Brody, 1998), and the consequences of this for them, particularly when there are disparities in social group memberships such as sexual orientation (Turell, 1999), age (Drury & Dennison, 2000), and ethnicity (Hammer & Rogan, 2002). Most members of the public have little idea beyond biased media exposure about what it is like to be a police officer, or what "community-oriented policing" involves. For example, civilians often express the misconception that officers are trained to shoot fleeing felons in the legs or arms.

**Perspective-Taking and CAT** In line with the rich and longstanding tradition of communication research on perspective-taking (see overview, Holtgraves, 2002; see also, Galinsky, Ku, & Wang, 2005), we have evaluated an exciting new program that encourages laypeople to take on the role of police officers in simulated and demanding situations. We have saved the report of that exercise

for this chapter. The Bakersfield Police Department has developed a "Citizens' Forum," which was honored with the 2004 California Attorney General's Crime Prevention Award. In a two-to-three hour forum, volunteer members of the audience engage in scenarios of crime scenes and events. In this role reversal, civilians are dressed as police officers and officers act as victims, bystanders, witnesses, and other civilians. The scenarios range from traffic violations to burglary and domestic violence. Participants complete a written survey before and after the forum to assess if and how their views of law enforcement have changed.

We have found with two different audiences and role-playing participants that significant and positive differences in images of police officers emerge as a consequence of watching others' role-play and/or participating in the role reversal themselves (total  $n = 108$ ). Importantly for our purposes, members of the public report that they have significantly more confidence in officers and perceive them as more accommodating, behaving more appropriately, and as being more trustworthy after this experience than before. Furthermore, in another context where audience time constraints were operative, Rotary Club members (who were older and reported larger incomes than the first audience) were subjected to just one scenario in less than a half-hour session. Even under these restrictions, those who completed the survey ( $n = 41$ ) reported that they saw officers as significantly more accommodative after than before the role-playing experience. Interestingly, one of the volunteers for this scenario quickly shot a protagonist and publicly admitted to the audience (who knew her quite well) that she was distraught and disturbed by her actions, especially given she was a longstanding and avowed pacifist!

Obviously, besides requiring more detailed research evaluations over a longer time period to understand the cognitive and affective mechanisms involved (for the audience as well as those participating), it may not be economically feasible to adopt such a program everywhere. Nonetheless, it may be usefully re-enacted on a regular basis, for example in high schools or via the local media. Beyond using audience actors who are avidly anti-police to begin with to determine the efficacy of such a program, it might well be that merely viewing a deftly-edited videotape of one of these sessions could have similar effects to those outlined above. For instance, a video of a respected peer (say a music or basketball star) who volunteers to role-play the police officer might have significant effects on an audience of fans of the star.

In a third, yet quite different pedagogical situation, undergraduate students in a sociology class were offered extra credit to undertake a three-hour tour of a local jail, from the Honor Farm to Maximum Security. All three of the tours, of approximately 11 students each, were personally led by the Sheriff Department's own Chief of Custody Operations. As before, the students were administered a short questionnaire prior to and subsequent to the tour. Attitude change was, once again, quite significant. After this tour, having viewed the kinds of problems law enforcement officers must deal with on a daily basis, students rated law enforcement officers as generally behaving more appropriately. In addition, students had significantly more confidence in, were more satisfied with, and rated more positively, law enforcement. Interestingly, for this chapter's concerns, the biggest shift in students' belief systems related to their viewing law enforcement

officers as very significantly more accommodating after this experience. Indeed, this is really the first time that perspective-taking has been examined in a CAT frame.

## EPILOGUE

It is our belief that if police–community relations are to improve in areas where they require bolstering, then intervention programs and training focused around mutual accommodation and trust need to be bilateral, ideally coordinated with both parties. Moreover, such interventions should have institutional support to the extent that local media report critically yet constructively on their dynamics, with versions of the programs also being introduced early into lifespan development at the elementary and high school levels in relevant curricula. Above, we have shown concrete ways in which civilians can benefit from and understand the complexities, tensions, challenges, and emotions involved in police work that can induce more empathic viewpoints as well as more compliance with and support of law enforcement in the community. Clearly, more elaborate and diverse insights (e.g., about the manifold stresses involved in the job in general) can be provided, which may better contextualize police actions in terms of the broader demands placed on the role. This process would also allow members of the community to differentiate amongst different police agencies and their values, as well as within any one of them to different kinds of officers. They would be in a better position to see beyond the badge, uniform, and equipment, and to accommodate to police officers in a more personalized manner (see Ryan, Meredith, MacLean, & Orange, 1995). In addition, we can alert members of the public to the different affective ways they themselves can react to officers at, say, a traffic stop, the prevalence of driver and passenger non-accommodation, and the potential consequences of this. An array of evaluation studies can be envisioned, with dependent measures varying from attributions about the police in general, to numbers of and kinds of calls about local suspicious circumstances, to involvement in neighborhood watches and other community–police policymaking.

Studies underway and planned will allow us to gauge what kinds of officer accommodation or non-accommodation evoke what kinds of attributions of traits (e.g., *respect, courteousness, and empathy*), resulting in what level and types of cooperation, indifference, frustration, aggravation, hostility, and so on. To this end, we are currently embarking on studies in various regions of the USA where reliable coding, as well as qualitative analyses, of videotaped traffic stops will allow us to document the fine-grained behavioral ingredients and sequences of *both* officers' and civilians' accommodative behaviors. In tandem, studies can be conducted to explore different members of the public's communicative schemas for "successful" traffic stops incurred for different violations (e.g., see Hajek & Giles, 2005). Whether officers' and the community's schemas for the same incident are isomorphic is an intriguing question; we suspect they are not, thereby yielding prospects for misattributions and miscommunication. Whether officers can distinguish among their colleagues those who are more or less accommodating, as

well as their attributed accounts for this, would also be interesting to determine. Vignette studies can inform us about what accommodative behaviors in context are most effective for garnering what kinds of reactions, and why. In addition, studies can be devised so as to assess the benefits, if any, in individual officers' accommodation to those who have felt that they personally, or their closely identified social groups (e.g., age, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation), have or are seriously suffering because of police action or attitude. It will not be until such theory-driven ground-level data about the nature of accommodation and consequences are robustly documented that we can design and implement (with the assistance of and input from law enforcement) incisive training programs for both police officers and civilians. Then, whether we can successfully train non-accommodative officers to throw on an accommodative mantle that will lead to independently-gauged accommodative policing success will be important to determine.

In this chapter, we have introduced a new and socially important frontier for applied communication study, which we hope will yield substantive payoffs in terms of innovative cross-cultural research (using ethnographic, discursive as well as experimental methods) and trigger the refinement of theory – in ways that might yield a safer tomorrow.

### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We are grateful to Emmie Cox, Paul Myers, and Mara Vlasuk for their input into an earlier draft of this chapter, to Officer Ron Rice for his invaluable work in developing and executing the Citizens' Forum in Bakersfield and at the Rotary Club, and to Nikki Jones and Chief Deputy Geoff Banks for their vital roles in the county jail field trips. We also are indebted to Paul Myers, again, for his efficient assistance in the Bakersfield, Rotary Club, and jail projects. Finally, we acknowledge the thorough, exceedingly helpful and supportive feedback of the editor, Klaus Fiedler, on a number of occasions throughout the editorial process, as well as to an anonymous reviewer on a prior draft of this chapter.

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